

PM Gharibashvili Requests European Commission to Separate itself From the Personification of De-oligarchization

By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili writes a letter to European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. In the letter Gharibashvili talks about the resolution adopted by the European Parliament on June 9 and states that it 'contains many unsubstantiated records and factual inaccuracies' and is ready to provide detailed information if necessary.

Gharibashvili refers to the part of the resolution that concerns the consideration of the imposition of sanctions on the former Prime Minister of Georgia, businessman Bidzina Ivanishvili, due to the role he played in the deterioration of the political process in Georgia.

Concern is expressed in the referred Resolution "over the destructive role played by the sole oligarch, Bidzina Ivanishvili, in Georgia's politics and economy, and the level of control he exerts over the government and its decisions, including those on the politically motivated persecution of journalists and political opponents". Resolution also seems "deeply worried by Ivanishvili's exposed personal and business links to the Kremlin, which determine the position of the current Government of Georgia towards sanctions on Russia". In addition, it "calls on the Council and democratic partners to consider imposing personal sanctions on Ivanishvili for his role in the deterioration of the political process in Georgia".

According to the letter, the above entries of the Resolution passed by the European Parliament are not based on any evidence and are aimed to discredit the current system of governance in Georgia. "Opponents have never produced any evidence of Bidzina Ivanishvili intervening in politics or justice; besides, he no longer runs businesses in the country and no precedent of any kind exists on alleged personal or business connections with Russia. Thus, everything that



Georgian service (RFE/RL)

was noted in the Resolution about informal governance is totally fictional.

Due to clear reasons, I will not elaborate on the outstanding contribution made by Bidzina Ivanishvili in ending the undemocratic rule in Georgia in 2012 and in ensuring the fundamentally democratic progress of the country from 2012."

PM says the accusations of 'informal governance' are personally offensive to him and, the radical part of the opposition is using the notes of the resolution to further deepen the polarization in Georgia.

Also, the resolution was directly used by the Swiss bank to put Bidzina Ivanishvili's financial transfers on hold. Accordingly, the bank uses the document of the European Parliament to undermine the legal rights of the former Prime Minister of Georgia, which also discredits the country.

According to Gharibashvili, in order to neutralize the negative impact of the European Parliament's resolution, it is important for the European Commission to express a clear position regarding the accusa-

tions expressed in the resolution so that 'Georgian people towards European institutions and for keeping the radical wing of the opposition away from deepening the polarization on the grounds of the Resolution passed by the European Parliament'.

"In addition, assessment document published by the European Commission on Georgia, mentions a term 'de-oligarchisation' similar to documents related to Ukraine and Moldova. Our political opponents and their lobbyists within the European Parliament actively refer and note that European Commission made an entry on deoligarchisation in its document because of Bidzina Ivanishvili." letter reads emphasizing that 'Ivanishvili has no formal or informal influence on the Georgian politics or media and he may not be deemed oligarch by any legal or political criteria. In contrast with the aforesaid, there are several affluent individuals with criminal track records, who have an active influence on politics and media in favor of the radical wing of the opposition'.

PM urges the Commission to

clearly distance itself from the personification of an entry about de-oligarchization, so that the document is not used to manipulate or discredit the governance system in Georgia and there is no space left for speculation, to maintain a high degree of trust towards European institutions in Georgian society and to facilitate a decline in the polarization in the country.

Notably, Gharibashvili also attached his letter published in Georgia several days ago with a detailed clarification of main values and principles that are guiding the governance system in his country. He expressed belief that the referred letter will provide a clear impression on why the radical wing of opposition is fighting against Ivanishvili, even after his total exit from politics.

On June 9, the European Parliament voted for a resolution on media freedom violations and journalists' safety challenges in Georgia. The document includes a call to consider the imposition of targeted sanctions against former Georgian Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili. It notes that Ivanishvili plays a 'destructive

role' in Georgian politics and economy and has influence over 'politically motivated persecution of journalists and political opponents'.

On June 17, European Commission issued recommendations regarding granting the status of candidate for EU membership to Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova. The European Commission's recommendation to the Council of Leaders of the EU Member States is to give Ukraine and Moldova the status of a candidate for EU membership with mandatory conditions, while Georgia first fulfills specific conditions and the issue of granting it status is decided accordingly.

In order to obtain the candidate status, Georgia will have to fulfill 12 requirements, one of which concerns de-oligarchization. The ruling party says that the oligarchs are Davit Kezerashvili, one of the shareholders of the TV company 'Formula' and the imprisoned third president of Georgia, Mikheil Saakashvili, and not Bidzina Ivanishvili, the founder of their party.

Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.8281; Euro - 2.8994; GBP - 3.3994; 100 Russian Ruble - 5.0280; Swiss Franc - 2.9201

We Need to Be Able to Talk About Our Disagreements, US Ambassador to Georgia Says



U.S. Ambassador to Georgia Kelly Degnan.

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

We have a very long friendship with Georgia and like all good friends, sometimes we disagree, the U.S. Ambassador to Georgia Kelly Degnan told reporters on Tuesday. The reporter's question was related

to judge Lasha Chkhikvadze and sanctions against him.

"We need to be able to talk about our disagreements and we do that usually in private is most effective. Sometimes we speak out publicly if it is an issue that we have great concerns about, and that is what we did in this

case, we issued public statements expressing the United States' concern about the timing and the charges involved," Kelly Degnan said.

The ambassador noted that the United States was 'not alone in expressing these concerns', stressing that Public Defender, several NGOs, and several other international friends of Georgia had also shared the same concerns. According to her, this process was done 'quite publicly' and it is 'quite a normal thing to have happened'. "This is standard practice. I think it's being spun up. I think a lot of is being made out of something that is absolutely not a scandal. It's very routine business," she added.

"The United States has spent a long time working with Georgia's judiciary, building capacity, and trying to improve the professionalism, transparency, the independence of the judicial system and that has involved a



"The United States has spent a long time working with Georgia's judiciary, building capacity, and trying to improve the professionalism, transparency, and the independence of the judicial system", the US Ambassador to Georgia said.

lot of exchanges between the United States experts and the Georgian judges, prosecutors, and attorneys," the ambassador said, adding that these are routine meetings that happen all the time.

Ambassador Degnan also pointed out the exchange pro-

grams which enable Georgians to meet with American counterparts, exchange views, learn from each other, and then bring that back to Georgia. As she stressed, there are over 6,000 Georgians on exchange programs in educational, cultural, and judicial directions.

The Prosecutor's Office releases a statement on the investigation launched in connection with the confrontation on the territory of the US Embassy

By MESSENGER STAFF

The Georgian Prosecutor's Office issues a statement regarding the inquiry into the confrontation that occurred on US Embassy property.

The General Prosecutor's Office of Georgia reportedly began an inquiry into the circumstances of violence and threats at the official reception hosted on the grounds of the US Embassy and attended by members of the Georgian Parliament on June 30 of this year.

"On July 15 of this year, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, the Prosecutor's Office received a note from the Embassy of the United States of America in Georgia, in which they express their readiness, taking into ac-

count the diplomatic immunity of the Embassy and Embassy staff, to cooperate with the relevant agencies of Georgia through diplomatic channels regarding the investigation of the incident that occurred on June 30, on the territory of the diplomatic mission.

The Prosecutor's Office of Georgia began an inquiry into the criminal case after receiving the aforementioned note, and all essential investigative and procedural procedures would be actively carried out, according to the agency.

According to the Prosecutor's Office, the inquiry was initiated as a result of Vakhtang Tsereteli's statement, the founder of LLC TV Pirveli, in which he referred to the alleged aggression Georgian Parliamentarians allegedly committed against him. The Prosecutor General's Office of Georgia also received a statement from Anri Okhanashvili, a member of the Georgian Parliament, detailing the alleged threats made by

Vakhtang Tsereteli against him. Levan Mgaloblishvili, a member of the Georgian Parliament, sent a message regarding the case in which he referred to suspected violence against him.

"Since all the facts noted in the statements of the above-mentioned persons are related to the fact of violence and threats that took place on June 30 at the official reception on the territory of the United States Embassy in Georgia, they will be studied as part of this criminal case.

At 18:00, Vakhtang Tsereteli, the founder of LLC TV Pirveli, was summoned to the General Prosecutor's Office of Georgia for questioning as a witness.

The public will be further informed about the results of the investigation. At the same time, we express our readiness to fully cooperate with the Embassy of the United States of America in Georgia in the process of fully investigating the fact that occurred on June 30, on their territory," reads the statement.

EU Foreign Ministers agree extra €500 million in military support to Ukraine

On 19 July, the EU Foreign Affairs Council reached political agreement on an additional €500 million in military support for Ukraine under the European Peace Facility (EPF). This disbursement will bring the total amount of military support under the EPF to €2.5 billion.

"Russia is trying to destroy Ukraine and the Ukrainian nation, and at the same time unleash a global food and energy crisis," said EU High Representative Josep Borrell. "Ministers unanimously agreed on the need to continue to stand firmly with Ukraine and lend it all our support in its fight for freedom and independence. Ukraine needs more arms, we will provide them."

At the beginning of the meeting, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba addressed EU ministers via video conference, and briefed them about the latest developments on the ground.

The Council also confirmed that it would continue its work on restrictive measures on the basis of a joint proposal from the European Commission and the High Representative, including measures to close loopholes and avoid circumvention. Josep Borrell said that EU sanctions work and the Russian economy is severely affected.

The ministers also said that the EU would continue to support Ukraine in implementing its reform agenda within the European perspective, after it was recently granted the status of candidate country by the European Council. The next EU-Ukraine Association Council should take place on 5 September 2020. (euneighbourseast.eu)



Weather

Wednesday, July 20

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 34°C

Night Partly Cloudy
Low: 21°C

Thursday, July 21

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 29°C

Night Partly Cloudy
Low: 20°C

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43, Chovelidze st., Tbilisi,
0108, Georgia
Founded by Prof.

Zaza Gachechiladze

Tamar Gachechiladze
Publisher

Mob.: +995 599 565621; +995 577 760000
E-mail: messenger@messenger.com.ge
<http://www.messenger.com.ge/>

Nino Metreveli
Commercial Director

Mariam Mchedlidze
Editor-in-Chief

Khatuna Gogichaishvili
Layout Designer, Photographer

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